Support Crumbles in Nixon

By Tim O'Brien
Washington Post Staff Writer

The latest barrage of Watergate events left a shambles of confusion, shock and anguish yesterday in those most steadfast bastions of pro-Nixon sentiment across the country.

From Mississippi and Alabama to the Illionois heartland to Whittier, Calif., the President's long-time grassroots support appeared to be crumbling.

In Alabama, which gave Mr. Nixon 74 per cent of its presidential votes in 1972, the President's strongest supporters asked him to resign.

C. Snow Hinton, the Tuscaloosa mayor who a week ago called the House Judiciary Committee hearings "disgusting," said yesterday Mr. Nixon "would do the nation a service by resigning, as I don't feel under the present circumstances he could provide the leadership this country needs at this time."

In Huntsville, Ala., an influential Nixon-supporter, Louis Salmon Jr., called the latest revelations "sickening."

"I couldn't feel worse," said Salmon, a lawyer. "Here's a man I've publicly supported from the beginning. I've defended him. I've felt like he was leveling with us. Then the walls come caving in."

In its Tuesday editions, The Birmingham News, Alabama's largest newspaper, called on the President to resign: "Since the President yesterday admitted his complicity in the cover-up, there is no longer any question of his being forced to resign for strictly political reasons."

The Huntsville Times, largest paper in northern Alabama, also called for resignation "because the President has admitted guilt, even though he seemed, at least as a defense maneuver, to claim it as excusable guilt. The nation does not see it so."

Both papers endorsed Mr. Nixon in 1972.

In Mississippi, which gave the President 80 per cent of its presidential votes in 1972, U.S. Rep. Thad Cochson, a Republican, joined Rep. Trent Lott, aother Republic, in urging the President to resign.

Clarke Reed, chairman of the Southern Association of Republican State Chairmen and party chairman in Mississippi, said, "I have already relayed to both Trent and Thad that I personnally back their actions. I can find no fault in them at all. I concur in their positions."

Gil Carmichael, a progressive Republican from Meridian who ran a surprisingly close senatorial race against Sen. James O. Eastland (D-Miss.) in 1972, said, "The majority of the people in the state have stood by him. I've stood with him and I think we all feel a great disappointment in that he's let us down."

In Whittier, Calif., the President's home district, the reaction among many f the faithful echoed the anguish shown by Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), a key Nixon defender during the Judiciary Committee debates, in his statement Monday calling on Mr. Nixon to resign.

Wiggins' statement came as a surprise to his district aides. "We're in a complete state of shock," said Jane B. Dressen, Wiggins' executive secretary in Fullerton. Of 15 calls received yesterday morning, 10 supported the

Territory Across Nation

congressman's new position, she said.

The Orange County Register, the largest daily in the district, plans to editorialize in support of Wiggins today. Executive editor Jim Dean said, "The illusion has been dissipated. The President has admittedobstructionof justice. Maybe lawyers can continue to haggle about his guilt or innocence, but, for the layman, yesterday's revelations should settle it."

Roy Knauft, who headed the campaign to re-elect the President in Yorba Linda, Mr.Nixon's birthplace, said, "I think most people here believe (Wiggins) acted with integrity. But we're a long way from Washington and we're not yet willing to dump the President. I think we are willing to let the chips fall where they may and to support the Congress in whatever position it might take."

Blake Sanborn, mayor of Whittier, said he feels "a sense of shock" reverberating through Nixon supporters. But he said he does not favor impeachment and will watch events "to see what evidence there is."

The Whittier Daily News, the town's only daily, has consistently supported the President but plans to say today that Mr. Nixon's knowledge of the cover-up is astounding."

"Much more serious is why he kept such information from his own counsel and the Supreme Court," says the News' editorial. "It may be that he is throwing himself on the mercy of the court in the hope of ameliorating his potential punishment." The editorial calls for a formal conclusion to the impeachment process.

In the 16th District of Illinois, which went for Mr. Nixon by hefty margins in both 1968 and 1972, the Rockford Morning Star will reiterate today an earlier call for the President's resignation. "The President has forfeited all but his job," the paper will say. "He can resign. Or he can bow to what he sees as inevitable—impeachment in the House, trial in the Senate."

The Janesville (Wis.) Gazette, a traditionally conservative newspaper across the state line, yesterday called for the first time for the President's resignation.

In Wisconsin's 8th District, another Nixon stronghold in the 1968 and 1972 elections, some of his GOP support appeared to wither. Gerald Buckley, a Green Bay stockbroker and local GOP official, said, "There has been an overt act of withholding information. For the good of the two-party system I feel he must resign immediately."

Elizabeth Pfiefer, GOP National Committeewoman and Green Bay resident said, "I find the news very disturbing . . . I am very, very saddened by all these events I think all Americans are."

And in the Greenville, S.C., area—which went 80 per cent for Mr. Nixon in 1972—the county GOP chairman said he is "disappointed" and "regretful" that the "regretful" that the President "hid the evidence." But, said Chairman Mike President "hid the evidence," Spivey, "it would almost have to be armed robbery or something of that nature to convince me that he has committed an impeachable offense."

Paul Foster, Democratic chairman of Greenville, called for the President's resignation but urged that he be granted some protection against further prosecution.

But through this chorus of dismay and confusion, at least one loud voice was sounded in support of the President. Eddie Harbin, past chairman of the Greenville GOP, said he proudly declares himself a "loyal Nixonian." He said. "President Nixon will go down in history as one of the greatest Presidents since the inception of this country."